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Reasoning in the personal and moral domains: Adolescent and young adult women's decision-making regarding abortion

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Abstract

The present investigation of adolescent and young adult women's reasoning, and decision-making about abortion was conducted to determine whether reasoning about abortion could be described by moral, social-conventional, and personal concepts and to examine relationships between domain of reasoning and action choices. Seventy single women, ranging in age from 13 to 31 and divided between 25 women having abortions, 23 women continuing their pregnancies, and 22 never-pregnant women, were administered a semi-structured clinical interview about abortion and two hypothetical moral judgement dilemmas. A classification task was developed to provide an additional measure of reasoning in different domains. Another 29 single, first-pregnant women provided a comparison of the effects of these procedures on decision-making. Content analysis of the protocols revealed that responses to the abortion interview could be

reliably distinguished between concepts of morality and personal issues and their coordination or lack of coordination. Subjects treating abortion as a moral issue were more likely to continue their pregnancies while subjects treating abortion as a personal issue were more likely to obtain an abortion. Differences in reasoning between pregnant and nonpregnant subjects were not observed. Moral responses to the abortion interview were found to be highly related to hypothetical moral judgments.



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